

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00 NSAE-00
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-12 OMB-01
TRSE-00 DOE-15 SOE-02 DOEE-00 SSM-03 IO-13 HA-05
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O R 201125Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7171
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1487

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION, MARCH 20 1200 HOURS LOCAL

REF: BEIRUT 1473 (191107Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE ISRAELIS ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 19
LAUNCHED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE TOWARD THE WEST. THE PLO ISSUED A VERY
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HOSTILE STATEMENT TOWARD THE UNITED STATES. Wafa REPORTED 176
CIVILIANS KILLED AND 392 WOUNDED. REFUGEES CONTINUE TO POUR
INTO BEIRUT AND SIDON. THERE HAS BEEN A MAJOR CHANGE FOR THE
WORSE IN THE SECURITY SITUATION IN THE CAPITAL SINCE THE
ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH LEBANON ON MARCH 15. END SUMMARY.

2. MILITARY SITUATION.

A. ISRAELIS ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 19 LAUNCHED A MAJOR OFFENSIVE AS ARMORED COLUMNS WHICH HAD OCCUPIED TIBNIN ON MARCH 18 MOVED TO THE WEST AND ADVANCED TOWARDS TYRE, ACCORDING TO DATT AND OTHER SOURCES. Wafa CHARACTERIZED THE FIGHTING AS THE HEAVIEST WITHIN THE LAST FIVE DAYS.

B. ACCORDING TO L'ORIENT LE JOUR, BY LATE MARCH 19 THE IDF HAD ADVANCED TO AL BAZURIYAH (ABOUT 5 KM SOUTHEAST OF TYRE) AND ABBASIYAH (ABOUT 5 KM NORTHEAST OF TYRE), HAD TAKEN THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMP OF BURJ ASH SHAMALI, AND WAS FIGHTING WITHIN 2 KM OF TYRE. DATT SOURCES WHO VISITED TYRE ON MARCH 19 CONFIRMED THAT ISRAELI FORCES WERE IN AL BAZURIYAH, BUT HAD NO INFO ON ABBASIYAH.

C. ELSEWHERE, ISRAELI FORCES MOVED ON THE IMPORTANT PALESTINIAN POSITION OF GHANDURIYAH SOUTH OF THE LITANI AND SOUTHWEST OF NABATIYAH. ACCORDING TO DATT SOURCES, THE ISRAELIS WERE ALSO IN CONTROL OF THE Khardali BRIDGE, ON AN APPROACH ROUTE TO NABATIYAH, ONE OF THE COMMAND CENTERS OF THE PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE.

D. IN THE ARQUB, ISRAELI PLANES CONTINUED TO STRIKE AROUND HASBIYAH BUT THE IDF HAD STILL NOT TAKEN THIS KEY ARQUB TOWN. IN THE NORTH, THREE ISRAELI AIRCRAFT REPORTEDLY OVERFLEW THE PALESTINIAN REFUGEE CAMPS OF NAHR AL BARID AND BADAWI. PALESTINIAN ANTIAIRCRAFT FORCES FIRED ON THE PLANES WHICH DID NOT, HOWEVER, CARRY OUT ANY STRIKES ON THE CAMPS.

3. PLO RESPONDS TO WHITE HOUSE STATEMENT.
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IN RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT CARTER'S MARCH 16 REMARKS THAT ISRAEL SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM SOUTH LEBANON, THE PLO HAS PUBLICLY REACTED WITH ONE OF ITS MOST HOSTILE STATEMENTS TOWARD THE U.S. SINCE THE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURATION. ACCORDING TO Wafa, AN OFFICIAL PLO SPOKESMAN IN BEIRUT ON MARCH 18 SAID:

--"THE USA IS TRYING TO THROW SAND IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD AND COVER UP ITS CONSPIRATORIAL STAND HOSTILE TO THE PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE PEOPLES.

--"THE ISRAELI AGGRESSION AGAINST SOUTH LEBANON TOOK PLACE WITH THE KNOWLEDGE AND AGREEMENT OF THE USA, AND EVEN WITH ITS APPROVAL AND ENCOURAGEMENT. . . . THE USA HOSTILITY TO OUR PEOPLE INCREASES EVERY DAY AND THE U.S. LEADERSHIP HEADED BY CARTER CONSPIRES AGAINST THE RESOURCES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND THE ARAB NATION.

--"YASIR ARAFAT REVEALED THIS FACT YESTERDAY WHEN HE SAID AT THE KAMAL JUMBLATT RALLY THAT CARTER, WHO CONSPIRES WITH BEGIN, SHOULD UNDERSTAND THAT THIS CONSPIRACY HAS BEEN EXPOSED AND THAT WE WILL REJECT UTTERLY ANY CONCESSIONS IMPOSED ON US. . ."

4. CASUALTY FIGURES FROM Wafa.

Wafa ON MARCH 19 CLAIMED THE FOLLOWING CASUALTY STATISTICS:

--ISRAELI FORCES: 450 KILLED OR WOUNDED; FOUR PLANES SHOT

DOWN, AND 100 VEHICLES DAMAGED OR DESTROYED.

--"JOINT FORCES" (PALESTINIAN AND LEBANESE LEFTISTS): "144

KILLED, SEVERELY WOUNDED OR MISSING; "50 VEHICLES DESTROYED OR
DAMAGED; "A NUMBER OF GUNS AND ROCKET LAUNCHERS DESTROYED."

--CIVILIANS: 176 KILLED AND 392 WOUNDED.

5. REFUGEES.

A. REFUGEES CONTINUE TO POUR INTO BEIRUT AND SIDON. THE
GOVERNMENT HAS 1400 TENTS AND HAS SET UP TEMPORARY ENCAMPMENTS
IN THE BEIRUT AND SIDON AREAS. THE CENTERS ARE WOEFULLY INADE-
QUATE TO MEET IMMEDIATE NEEDS, AND REFUGEES CONTINUE TO SEIZE
AND OCCUPY APARTMENTS IN BOTH CITIES.

B. ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL PRESS, ONLY 10 PERCENT OF THE ORIGINAL
POPULATION REMAINED IN TYRE AS OF MARCH 19. THE CITY WAS
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WITHOUT ELECTRICITY, WATER AND TELEPHONES, L'ORIENT LE-JOUR SAID.

6. SITUATION IN BEIRUT.

THERE HAS BEEN A MAJOR CHANGE FOR THE WORSE IN THE SECURITY
SITUATION IN BEIRUT SINCE THE ISRAELI INVASION OF SOUTH
LEBANON ON MARCH 15. FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE END OF FIGHTING
IN 1976, LOCAL ARMED MILITIA ROUTINELY APPEAR ON THE STREETS.
MOREOVER, MANY OF THE REFUGEES FROM THE SOUTH HAVE BROUGHT GUNS
WITH THEM. IN ADDITION TO PREVIOUSLY-REPORTED INCIDENTS
INVOLVING AMERICAN-OCCUPIED APARTMENTS, THE OWNER OF THE NEW
MALAS BUILDING, WHERE FOUR EMBASSY OFFICERS RESIDE, WAS FORCED
TO HIRE THREE ARMED AL MURABITUN MILITIAMEN TO KEEP OUT
REFUGEES.

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